

# WOMEN AT WORK: LABOR FORCE PARTICIPATION AND EMPOWERMENT IN KPK, PAKISTAN

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## Abstract

*This essay's goal is to shed light on the variables that affect married women's decisions to enter the workforce in KPK, Pakistan. This empirical study consists in the PDHS for the years 2017–18 uses binary logistic regression (1973 sample size). The findings show that while women's age and place of residence have a positive but slight impact on empowerment, women's education, occupation, wealth index, and husband's education all have a positive and statistically significant impact. A socioeconomic policy can be created for a developing area like KPK, Pakistan. On the basis of this research, a development policy can be created to improve human resource development for a developing and traditional economy like Pakistan, with a particular focus on gender issues. Researchers, decision-makers, and social scientists can get benefit from the conclusions of this work since it will raise the bar for social welfare and equity.*

**Keywords:** Employment; KPK; Binary logistic regression; Developing countries

## INTRODUCTION

In Pakistan, a developing nation, women's status in the social, economic, and political spheres of life is inferior to that of men. In accordance with UNDP (2016), Pakistan's Gender Inequality Index score is 0.546. UNDP uses this score to compare the gender relations in various nations throughout the world. Out of 159 countries in the world, the nation is rated in number 130. The same scenario is also shown by other development indicators that are gender-specific. Women's literacy rate in 2014 was 49 percent as compared to men's literacy rates of 70 percent, while girls' net primary enrollment rate was 53 percent compared to boys' enrollment rates of 60 percent (GOP, 2015). The nation with the lowest fifth participation rate in the world also

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has a sizeable gender difference in labor force participation (World Economic Forum, 2016). In 2014, the rate of female labor force participation in crude operations was 15.8% and in refined activities was 22.2%, whereas the rate for male labor force involvement in crude activities was 48.1% and in refined activities was 67.8%. (GOP, 2015). The gender gap in labor force participation demonstrates that Pakistan places limitations on women's access to paid employment. Cultural and societal standards are the cause of these limitations. In addition, women participate less in social activities than males do in politics and other spheres of public life. Women have less access to healthcare, food, and education. They have fewer opportunities to make money, less control over resources, and less freedom to make their own decisions. It is a sign that the country's condition with regard to gender disparity has gotten worse (Jejeebhoy and Sathar, 2001; Sathar and Kazi, 2000). Women's access to resources has been restricted by gender inequality in addition to other although it has the potential to improve society, it has also slowed down the nation's economic progress (Pervaiz et al., 2011).

In Pakistan, numerous public initiatives have been developed to increase women's empowerment. Various initiatives have been taken, including the National Plan of Action (NPA) 1998, the National Policy of Development and Empowerment of Women 2002, and the Punjab Protection of Women against Violence Act 2016. The government has taken steps to increase women's empowerment, but there are still issues, and it is important to solve them (Bushra and Wajih, 2013; Khan, 2010). Numerous social and cultural factors may influence the decision-making autonomy of women. Various elements, including the education of women and their involvement. Their age, place of residence, the number of male children, the husband's educational level, the gender of the head of the household, and their wealth status as shown by the possession of assets, real estate, and land can all have an impact on their empowerment in economic activities (Frankenberg and Thomas, 2001; Jejeebhoy, 2002; Kabeer, 1997; Ahmad and Sultan, 2004; Anwer et al., 2013).

The most important elements in this regard may be women's employment and educational status. These elements may improve the status of women in society and may boost up their predisposition to take part in domestic decision-making. It can also empower women by giving them more control over resources and raising understanding of their rights, which can assist to lower rates of infertility, child mortality, poverty, and gender inequality (Chaudhury, 1978; Lupri, 1969; Mukherjee, 1975; Ridley, 1959; Jejeebhoy, 1995; Acharya et al., 2010). The educational success of women, their

improved health, their independence in the economic sector of life, and their awareness of their rights can all contribute to their empowerment in society (Chaudhary et al., 2012). In contrast, uneducated women are economically less productive and have less influence over household and societal decisions (Mariam, 2012). Education of women is a significant factor that can lower the prevalence of infertility and infant death. It can boost up the use of contraceptives, raise the educational levels of children, protect women from violence, aid in the reduction of poverty, and strengthen the autonomy of women's decision-making both inside and outside the house. Women's educational attainment is thought to be strongly correlated with their ability to access resources, their awareness of their rights, their capacity to pursue equal employment opportunities, and their ability to support the growth of the economy (Bushra and Wajiha, 2013; Sathar and Kazi, 2000; Sathar, 1987; Sathar et al., 1988; Mahmood, and Ringheim, 1993). The decision-making autonomy of women within the home is increased by their job outside the home and participation in paid economic activities (Roy and Niranjana, 2004; World Bank, 1995). Paid work reduces their need on social assistance and boosts their confidence (Khan, 2010). In this case study of Pakistan, a developing nation, we want to understand how empowerment might be impacted by education and work position.

The unemployment rate is 7.3 percent, with the overall labor force participation rate being 42.7 percent. Agriculture accounts for 31.7% of all employment, with the share of industry at 26.6 percent. 42.4 percent of all jobs are in the service sector.

Women's standing in developing countries is defined by systematic gender relegation due to their social structure, however this varies greatly among regions, social classes, and industries. From a worldwide perspective, women's empowerment is a crucial issue for societal advancement. Although it has various components, it is closely related to a number of areas, including social and economic (Malhotra et al., 2002). Jejeebhoy and Sathar (2001) define women's empowerment as having the same voice as their spouses in family matters that have an impact on their day-to-day activities and decision-making. They have also suggested additional factors, such as awareness and various sorts of knowledge, which will support the authority's ability to make autonomous decisions and mobility autonomy. The process of strengthening a person's capacity to make independent decisions and then translate those decisions into results was characterised as empowerment by the World Bank in 2002. According to empowerment, Moore and Dyson (1983) identify private and associated concerns and gather the relevant

knowledge. Similar to this, Keller and Mbewe (1991) noted a process whereby women gained the capacity to increase their independence, emphasise and regulate their earnings, and thus question and remove their subordination.

The foundation of empowerment is the transfer of authority to a disadvantaged group, like women. Its ultimate objective is to deal with problems related to women's health, equality for women and lower status (Mathur & Agarwal, 2017). Women in particular and society at large are impacted by gender equality. Women's empowerment has recently taken centre stage in the fight for gender equality. Numerous national development goals now place a greater emphasis on the inclusion of women and their participation in the economy. The ability to make decisions in the social, economic, and political spheres of life is referred to as women's empowerment (Mokta, 2014). There are several ways to do it, such as through education, employment, and the exercise of their legal, social, and political rights (Ghosh, 2019; Tabassum et al., 2019). Making decisions and having a paid employment are both crucial components of economic gender equality (Noureen, 2015).

This research work contains different sections like introduction, literature review, methodology and last one is results and discussions.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Making decisions about things like marital preferences, childbirth preferences, freedom of mobility, jobs, and the significance of life growth is another facet of empowerment. This dimension was not employed in this instance, and Kabeer (2001) defined empowerment as having more choices in one's life. To get these options, she offered three interrelated dimensions. Almost all structures for women's empowerment follow the same route to communicate the idea of women's empowerment. Studying these systems offers a guide for a fully thought-out and logical notion of empowerment, on the other hand. According to various groups or combinations of the aforementioned paradigm, empowerment is largely the building of trust in the ability, strength, and collectivity of individuals or groups to change their environment. By characterising empowerment as the development of resources and skills (Bennett, 2002). Self-awareness, self-esteem, self-confidence, and agency are all considered components of female empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). Similar to this, empowerment calls for health, awareness, opportunity, and resource management (UNICEF 1994). The concept of wellbeing in this context refers to contentment, visibility to

awareness, possibilities to simple resource accessibility, and control states to resource utilisation. According to Kellar and Mabwewe (1991), empowerment is a process that enables women to organise themselves in order to strengthen their autonomy, assert their decision-making authority, and manage resources in order to challenge and end their subservience. According to UNDP, women are the ones who gauge how empowered women are in their homes, workplaces, communities, and when it comes to participating in socioeconomic and political life (2015). Empowerment has been calculated by using indirect elements in numerous studies, one of which looked at the problems faced by women (proxy variables). Age, age at marriage, the age difference between the wife and the husband, education, and employment position are the most often used indicators in these studies (Mason, 1986). The roles of men and women in various industries are explained using the concept of gender equality.

According to the normative perspective, gender equality is meant to be based on applicable norms and regulations, with a person's attitude being more influenced by loyalty than by the norms and standards that are applicable in their environment. However, if seen from a sociological perspective, specifically from the perspective of society, the law that governs society, social institutions, and social institutions, specifically addressing the fact that gender equality does not predominate among men, there is a need for equality (Horak, S., & Suseno, Y. (2022).

In order to increase the contribution of women to development, gender equality is also a hot topic. By creating the notion of "No one left behind," this promise is carried out to accomplish the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030. Similar to this, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative places a strong emphasis on expanding the use of technology-based information and communication for women's empowerment (Nguyen, X. T., 2021; Mubeen, S., Shahid, M. H., & Hye, Q. M. A. (2022)).

The available research makes it easy to see the gender discrepancy that these measurements indicate. For instance, Pakistan's female labour force participation percentage is considerably lower than that of its male counterparts (25% vs. 82% respectively). (Alam, A. (2022) Additionally, compared to men, adult women had a lower secondary education attainment rate (26.7% vs. 47.3%). (Harris, D. A et al., 2022). Low educational possibilities and poor academic performance also contribute to low levels of empowerment among women, especially those who reside in rural areas of the nation (Hellwig, F., & Barros, A. J. (2023). The situation is made worse by the fact that Pakistani female lawmakers appear to be constrained by

patriarchal ideals and norms when they could be empowered. According to the following sources: Younas, A. et al. (2022); Mubeen, S., Hye, Q. M. A., Shahid, M. H., & Rehan, R. (2022). In these circumstances, the concept of empowerment in Pakistan appears to be purely theoretical with no feeling of practical embodiment.

In Pakistani society's complex socio-demographic and cultural environment, women's empowerment has consistently been a contentious topic. On every important metric of human growth, women perform worse than males. Therefore, research on many factors influencing women's empowerment is critical in the Pakistani context.

## METHODOLOGY

This study relied on survey data from Pakistan's 2017–18 Demographic and Health Survey. This information relates to all areas and sectors of Pakistan, but for this current study, the researchers solely used KPK data. We chose this area because it lacks adequate facilities and has less empowerment of women than other parts of Pakistan. They find it difficult to shift from one location to another. Everything pertaining to their personal and charitable endeavors need their authorization.

We used this model for analysis

$$P(1/p) = b_0 + b_1 \text{age} + b_2 \text{res} + b_3 \text{edu} + b_4 H.\text{edu} + b_5 \text{Account} + b_6 \text{BISP} + b_7 \text{emp} + b_8 \text{violence} + b_9 P.\text{Media} + b_{10} E.\text{Media} + b_{11} \text{No of sons} + b_{12} F.\text{pref} + b_{13} \text{wealth} + b_{14} \text{prop} + \mu$$

*Dependent variable is women empowerment and independent variables include age of respondent, residence of respondent education of both husband and respondent, BISP and media with the same time properly and wealth index, number of sons*

The empowerment of women is our dependent variable which contains four proxies of decision making including:

1. Health care
2. household purchases
3. Visit to family
4. Spending on husband's earnings

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

For this analysis we used KPK data and detail is below

**Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (N= 1973)**

**Table 1: Participation of Women in Cecisions related to Health in KPK**

Socio-economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	.206	.585	1.229	.587	2.572
25-29	.554	.132	1.740	.846	3.578
30-34	.618	.105	1.855	.879	3.915
35-39	.513	.198	1.671	.765	3.649
40-44	.761	.103	2.141	.857	5.347
45-49	.578	.423	1.783	.433	7.343
place of residence					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	.164	.183	1.179	.925	1.501
The highest educational level of respondent					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.250	.179	.779	.541	1.121
Secondary	-.105	.485	.900	.669	1.210
Higher	-.103	.564	.902	.635	1.281
Bank account					
No	Ref				
Yes	1.311	.000	3.711	1.976	6.968
Husband education					
No education	Ref				
Primary	.225	.303	1.252	.817	1.918
Secondary	.592	.000	1.808	1.309	2.496
Higher	.723	.000	2.062	1.450	2.930
Respondent currently working					
No	Ref				
Yes	.398	.097	1.489	.930	2.383
BISP					
No	Ref				
Yes	.376	.071	1.457	.969	2.191
Print media					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.007	.978	.993	.619	1.594

<b>No of sons</b>					
No sons	Ref				
One sons	.150	.396	1.161	.822	1.641
Two sons	.136	.487	1.146	.780	1.684
Three sons	.455	.033	1.576	1.037	2.395
Four sons	.651	.023	1.917	1.094	3.361
Above four sons	.408	.198	1.505	.808	2.801
<b>Domestic violence</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	-1.145	.000	.318	.248	.409
<b>Fertility preference</b>					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	-.325	.091	.722	.495	1.053
No more	.450	.001	1.569	1.204	2.044
<b>Electronic media</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.162	.207	1.176	.915	1.511
<b>Wealth status</b>					
Poor	Ref				
Rich	.693	.014	2.000	1.149	3.480
<b>Own a property</b>					
Does not own	Ref				
Own	.235	.462	1.266	.675	2.371

Although age is unimportant, it is more likely to influence healthcare decisions. Women who are 40 to 44 years old are twice as likely to make decisions as males. Compared to rural women, urban women are one time more likely to make decisions. Women with higher levels of education are less likely to make important decisions. Three times as many women than those without bank accounts are likely to make judgments. Education of the husband is significantly related. Women whose husbands hold advanced degrees are twice as likely to participate in decision-making. Media exposure has a negligible correlation in province KPK. One time more likely to make decisions are the ladies who favor having no more children.



**Table 2: KPK, Participation of Women in Decisions related to Household Purchases**

Socio-economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	-.349	.390	.706	.319	1.561
25-29	.188	.627	1.207	.565	2.576
30-34	.658	.098	1.932	.886	4.212
35-39	.249	.552	1.283	.564	2.917
40-44	.897	.062	2.453	.956	6.297
45-49	.649	.374	1.914	.458	8.008
place of residence					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	.053	.701	1.054	.806	1.379
The highest educational level of respondent					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.134	.510	.875	.588	1.302
Secondary	-.174	.303	.840	.603	1.170
Higher	-.104	.601	.901	.610	1.330
Bank account					
No	Ref				
Yes	1.064	.001	2.899	1.551	5.416
Husband education					
No education	Ref				
Primary	.252	.287	1.287	.809	2.048
Secondary	.452	.012	1.572	1.106	2.234
Higher	.482	.015	1.619	1.099	2.385
Respondent currently working					
No	Ref				
Yes	.694	.004	2.001	1.242	3.224
BISP					
No	Ref				
Yes	.222	.316	1.249	.809	1.929
Print media					
No	Ref				
Yes	.433	.078	1.542	.953	2.493
No of sons					
No sons	Ref				
One sons	-.168	.397	.845	.573	1.247
Two sons	-.119	.586	.888	.579	1.361

Three sons	.334	.148	1.397	.888	2.199
Four sons	.561	.061	1.752	.974	3.150
Above four sons	.482	.139	1.620	.855	3.068
<b>Domestic violence</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	-1.098	.000	.333	.252	.442
<b>Fertility preference</b>					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	-.398	.069	.672	.437	1.032
No more	.423	.004	1.527	1.140	2.045
<b>Electronic media</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.381	.007	1.464	1.109	1.932
<b>Wealth status</b>					
Poor	Ref				
Rich	.550	.067	1.733	.962	3.121
<b>Own a property</b>					
Does not own	Ref				
Own	-1.119	.024	.327	.124	.862

The following factors strongly influence decisions: place of residence, education, BISP, and number of boys. The others are strongly related. Wealth status has a strong correlation with wealth in KPK, and wealthy women are 1.733 times more likely to make decisions than those without it. The likelihood of making decisions is likewise highly correlated with property ownership, but it is lower than for people who do not own property.

**Table 3: KPK, Participation of Women in Decision Making related to visit to Family**

Socio-economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	.124	.753	1.132	.524	2.446
25-29	.652	.087	1.919	.910	4.045
30-34	1.025	.009	2.786	1.293	6.002
35-39	.800	.050	2.225	.999	4.956
40-44	1.406	.003	4.079	1.620	10.267
45-49	1.462	.026	4.316	1.187	15.689

<b>place of residence</b>					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	-.015	.904	.985	.771	1.259
<b>The highest educational level of respondent</b>					
No education	Ref				
Primary	-.142	.448	.868	.602	1.252
Secondary	.120	.422	1.127	.841	1.511
Higher	-.115	.531	.891	.622	1.278
<b>Bank account</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.206	.519	1.229	.657	2.299
<b>Husband education</b>					
No education	Ref				
Primary	.232	.271	1.261	.835	1.904
Secondary	.279	.084	1.322	.963	1.813
Higher	.228	.205	1.256	.883	1.788
<b>Respondent currently working</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.816	.000	2.263	1.431	3.577
<b>BISP</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.037	.859	1.038	.687	1.569
<b>Print media</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.769	.001	2.158	1.374	3.390
<b>No of sons</b>					
No sons	Ref				
One sons	-.021	.904	.979	.692	1.384
Two sons	-.081	.681	.923	.628	1.355
Three sons	-.094	.667	.911	.594	1.395
Four sons	.467	.095	1.595	.923	2.758
Above four sons	.041	.894	1.042	.570	1.906
<b>Domestic violence</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.995	.000	.370	.288	.475
<b>Fertility preference</b>					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	-.254	.187	.776	.532	1.131
No more	.500	.000	1.649	1.262	2.154
<b>Electronic media</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.440	.001	1.552	1.204	2.001
<b>Wealth status</b>					

Poor	Ref				
Rich	.753	.010	2.122	1.201	3.750
<b>Own a property</b>					
Does not own	Ref				
Own	-.347	.337	.707	.347	1.437

The likelihood of visiting family or relatives is greatly influenced by factors such as age, employment status, media exposure, domestic violence, and wealth level. Women who are wealthy are twice more likely to visit decisions. The correlation between BISP, bank account, and education is negligible.

**Table 4: In KPK, Participation of Women in Decisions regarding Spending on Husband's Earning**

Socio-economic characteristics of respondent	Beta	Significance	Odds	95% C.I.for EXP(B)	
				Lower	Upper
Age in 5-year groups					
15-19	Ref				
20-24	-.282	.433	.754	.373	1.526
25-29	.181	.600	1.199	.609	2.361
30-34	.288	.425	1.334	.658	2.704
35-39	-.028	.941	.972	.458	2.063
40-44	.263	.570	1.300	.525	3.218
45-49	.528	.448	1.696	.433	6.647
place of residence					
Rural	Ref				
Urban	-.062	.636	.940	.728	1.214
The highest educational level of respondent					
No education	Ref				
Primary	.086	.645	1.090	.755	1.574
Secondary	.024	.878	1.025	.751	1.399
Higher	-.043	.820	.957	.658	1.393
Bank account					
No	Ref				
Yes	.775	.015	2.170	1.165	4.040
Husband education					
No education	Ref				
Primary	.396	.081	1.486	.953	2.317
Secondary	.493	.005	1.638	1.162	2.309
Higher	.726	.000	2.067	1.427	2.995

<b>Respondent currently working</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.754	.002	2.126	1.332	3.392
<b>BISP</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.021	.929	.979	.622	1.541
<b>Print media</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.061	.808	.941	.574	1.542
<b>No of sons</b>					
No sons	Ref				
One sons	.154	.410	1.166	.809	1.680
Two sons	.033	.875	1.033	.687	1.554
Three sons	.368	.103	1.445	.928	2.249
Four sons	.656	.026	1.928	1.081	3.438
Above four sons	.264	.437	1.303	.669	2.538
<b>Domestic violence</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	-.909	.000	.403	.310	.524
<b>Fertility preference</b>					
Have another	Ref				
Undecided	-.212	.289	.809	.547	1.197
No more	.490	.001	1.633	1.234	2.161
<b>Electronic media</b>					
No	Ref				
Yes	.340	.012	1.405	1.078	1.831
<b>Wealth status</b>					
Poor	Ref				
Rich	.568	.051	1.765	.997	3.123
<b>Own a property</b>					
Does not own	Ref				
Own	-1.276	.009	.279	.107	.729

Spending on the husband's income, age, and likelihood of outcomes all have minor roles in choices. Compared to rural women, the function of urban women is less likely and unimportant. Women's education levels are unimportant, but those with a primary or secondary education are twice as likely to make decisions as those without one. Husband's education and bank account are strongly correlated.

In comparison to unemployed women, employed women are twice as likely to make decisions. Those who get BISP are less likely to do so than women who do not. In comparison to other women, those who have sons are more

prone to make decisions. Although less likely to influence purchasing choices, home ownership is highly connected to spending on the husband's earnings.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The table displays the decision-making involvement of women in regards to personal health care, significant household purchases, visits to family members, and spending on their husband's income. The results show that factors such as the age of the woman, the area, the respondent's residence, their highest level of education, their bank accounts, their husband's education, the BISP, media exposure, the number of sons, domestic violence, fertility preferences, wealth status, and property ownership have an almost significant impact (property ownership) on empowerment. It employs binary logistic regression. Below is a thorough explanation of the effects of each variable.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The important knowledge regarding women's empowerment in Pakistan and its many variables have been made available through this research. The conclusions are supported by a sizeable, generalizable body of data that repeatedly forecasts a positive association between the demographic, economic, and social factors studied and women's empowerment. The results of this study highlight the significance of passing laws to reduce girl-child marriages, which have a detrimental effect on girls' social and reproductive health. Focused action is necessary to combat feminized poverty in Pakistan, particularly in KPK and rural areas where women's rights are abused. Most people are not allowed to access information, jobs, or inheritance. As part of a national development strategy to raise the socioeconomic status of women, it is believed that women's education and employment require gender-based equal opportunity inventiveness. As a result, further efforts are needed to improve women's access to work and educational possibilities in Pakistan, which is still undeveloped. There is also a critical need to modify community norms and attitudes that discriminate against women through mass communication and education efforts. These movements must emphasize women's potential contribution to the general well-being of their families and society.

The cross-sectional nature of this study, which prevents drawing inferences about causality, constitutes a drawback that applies to it. Nevertheless, temporality can be determined between the different elements this article

examines and women's empowerment. Another drawback is that interviewers evaluated the data, which may have resulted in bias due to the women's socially acceptable responses. Future research may acquire primary qualitative data on the subject to create a comparison of the results of the current study.

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